



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel stopped by The Independent's office Thursday afternoon to talk about his plans to put the state's checkbook online to encourage transparency and deter political leaders from wasting tax dollars.  
Compiled by Amy L. Knapp | Massillon Independent

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel stopped by The Independent's office Thursday afternoon to talk about his plans to put the state's checkbook online to encourage transparency and deter political leaders from wasting tax dollars.

House Bill 175 or "Open Ohio," introduced by state Rep. Mike Dovilla (R-Berea), would require the state to launch the database. The bill recently passed the House. Mandel anticipates the Senate will consider the bill when it returns from recess in the fall, and he is hopeful the bill will be approved before the end of the year and the online database could be up and running at the beginning of 2015.

What is an online checkbook?

Under Mandel's plan, the state treasurer's office would create a searchable database of the state's expenditures. Taxpayers will be able to track spending, he said, while holding government officials accountable for their use of tax dollars.

Mandel said when the database is created, citizens will be able to search by government agency or by type of spending or compare spending in different agencies.

What purpose will the online database serve?

Mandel believes the citizens of Ohio have the right to see how their tax dollars are being spent.

"I believe in the concept that sunlight is the greatest disinfectant to government waste and the more we shine sunlight on government spending ... It makes government more efficient for the taxpayers," the treasurer said.

Mandel hopes the online database will help form an "army of citizen auditors" that will hold politicians accountable.

By having the state expenditures online, Mandel hopes leaders will think twice before wasting taxpayer money.

"Putting the state checkbook online will cause a lot of citizens to question public officials and I think that is a good thing," he said. "My hope is by increasing transparency it will increase confidence in our democracy and decrease cynicism about the system."

Are you confident the bill will pass the Senate?

Lobbyists and legislators on both sides of the aisles have tried to quash the bill, Mandel said, but that isn't deterring him.



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

"I will fight to get this passed," he said. "I have no problem standing up to powerful interests on both sides of the aisles when I know what I am doing is right for the people. I am not going to stop until I get it online."

Mandel said he prides himself on being a leader in government transparency. One of the first things he did when taking office nearly four years ago was to put the state salaries, pay for public school teachers and state property database online.

How are local governments, school boards and other entities that receive public funding responding to the call to put their checkbooks online?

Mandel has asked local government agencies to voluntarily join him in keeping financial information readily available to taxpayers. Many local leaders believe it is a good idea, he said, but they were concerned they didn't have the resources or funding to complete the project.

Mandel volunteered the state treasurer's office to manage and house the database for local governments at no charge.

"The more transparency you have the more confidence you have in our democracy," he said.

What do you plan to do if you are re-elected to a second term? Mandel, a Republican, faces Democratic challenger state Rep. Connie Pillich (D-Montgomery) in the November election.

Mandel said he will continue to focus on transparency in government.

"I have ideas on how I can shine more light on government spending and holding politicians accountable," he said.

He also hopes to get more involved in tax reform specifically working to eliminate property tax for senior citizens.

As a former Marine and Iraq war veteran, Mandel also plans to become more involved in veterans issues.

"The way some of our veterans are treated by the VA at the federal level is deplorable and embarrassing," he said. "I want to get involved at the state level to do everything I can to serve veterans."

Mandel said both the Republican and Democratic parties are broken in many ways and the people of Ohio are ready for young leaders who are willing to think outside of the box and shed their partisan labels in order to do the right thing for constituents.

"I don't care if someone is Democrat, Republic, Libertarian or vegetarian. It just doesn't matter," he said. "As long as they are willing to work together to move ball down the field economically for our state and our country."

####